

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BOARD OF FINANCE

JOINT MEETING

March 2, 2010

Chester Town Hall

Chester, Connecticut

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Selectmen held a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at the Chester Town Hall. The meeting was called to order by Tom Englert, Selectman at 7:05 p.m. In attendance included: Tom Englert, Selectman and Larry Sypher, Selectman.

Board of Finance members in attendance included: Virginia Carmany, Bruce Bickford, Rick Morrow, Joyce Aley, Jennifer Rannestad, and Rich Nanke (seated for Dave Cohen). Also in attendance: Charlie Greeney.

MINUTES

Larry Sypher made a motion to approve the February 16, 2010 meeting minutes, with corrections. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Corrections: page 3 – change Toco01 to TOC01

Page 3 – change town to two

Page 4 – strike “s” in transfers

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

None.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Larry Sypher made a motion to re-appoint Charlene Janeczek to the Retirement Board with a term to expire 12/16/2012. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS

Town Meeting Call

A copy of the revised Call was included in the BOS packet. Tom Englert reported that the BOF modified the Call at their last meeting. The BOF voted to transfer \$50,000 (instead of \$100,000) from Undesignated to various Capital Line Items. The BOF felt it important to fund the \$50,000 for the pay loader only.

Larry Sypher made a motion to adopt the Call as revised. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Contract to Operate Cedar Lake Concession Stand

A copy of the bid contract to operate Cedar Lake Concessions was submitted by Squiggy's Lakeside and included in the BOS packet.

Larry Sypher made a motion to accept the contract to operate Cedar Lake Concessions as presented. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Suspense List

Virginia Carmany called the BOF meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. Members seated included Virginia Carmany, Bruce Bickford (seated for Chris Johnson), Rick Morrow, Joyce Aley, and Jennifer Rannestad.

Included in the BOF packet was information regarding the Suspense List.

Joyce Aley made a motion to approve the suspense list as presented. Rick Morrow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Budget Discussion – Operating Budget

Tom Englert distributed an updated draft Operating Budget.

Tom Englert reported that the value of a mil, based on the Grand List, is approximately \$500,000.00. The town's projected revenue is down \$509,000.00 due primarily to the withdrawal of funds from the Undesignated Fund last year to buy down the mil rate.

Virginia Carmany added that there is no reduction in ECS funding at this time. This was funded at \$665,000.00 last year, the infrastructure remains at \$100,000 and the Ambulance remains at \$125,000.

Tom Englert reported on an increase of \$53,000 in the expense line items. He continued that operating expenses have decreased from last year; however, the Capital Budget (as submitted) shows an increase over last year.

A Summary of the Capital Budget was included in the Board packet. This budget is proposed to increase by \$195,000.00.

Joyce Aley commented that the proposed budget shows nothing for Open Space. Virginia Carmany responded that Open Space was funded in previous years but has not been funded recently. She continued that Conservation has requested funding for this budget year.

The Chester BOE and Region 4 BOE budgets were included in the packet. The Chester BOE budget shows a proposed increase of 1.6%. The Region 4 budget has a proposed increase of 2.14%. Chester's share of that goes up 3.9% due to an increase in ADM. The Region 4 and Chester BOE budget have not yet been voted on and approved.

Rich Nanke commented that the education budget continues to increase. Town operating expenses are expected to remain relatively flat. The BOF does not expect to take General Fund monies this year. He continued that it is time for someone to say "Uncle" for this continual educational increase. Virginia Carmany replied that the ADM increase is warranted; however they have not addressed the anticipated loss of Stimulus money and how these funds will be "made up" next year.

Jennifer Rannestad suggested the BOF take a more "long term" approach to the budget as the upcoming years will be difficult as Stimulus money into the school system will cease. Tom Englert reported on the procedures allowed to give guidance during the teacher contract negotiations. He continued that the BOE welcomes this input.

The past practice of using the Undesignated Fund Balance to "buy down" the mil rate was discussed. The BOF discussed the future of this practice.

Tom Englert reported that the budget, as proposed, has a shortfall of \$806,000 (1.61 mil).

Joyce Aley commented that parents "come out of the woodwork" to support the education budget.

The BOF discussed an appropriate fund balance level (between 10 and 14%).

Virginia Carmany reported that consistently over the last 8 years, spikes in the education costs have been balanced by cuts in either the Capital or Operating budget. This allowed the budget to remain flat. The school has been able to continually grow their budget more significantly than the Operating and Capital budgets.

The BOF discussed the results of a survey on taxes.

Tom Englert reported that at a recent Region 4 BOE meeting, the BOE commented that they needed to spend money this year, because the Stimulus money would be gone next year. Tom

continued that the school budget, as proposed, will equate to an approximate ½ mil increase to cover the \$243,000.00.

Jennifer Rannestad commented that the elementary school budget has been low; however, the Supervision District budget influences the elementary school budget.

The Board briefly discussed insurance options for school employees as well as the retirement package offered.

Tom Englert reported that the Region 4 BOE welcomes input into their budget. Their original budget was quite higher than their current request. Virginia Carmany responded that they are up \$413,000 plus the \$160,000 of Stimulus money. Tom continued that in order to make significant cuts and get the budget down to 1%, programs would need to be eliminated. Virginia Carmany commented that they will need to discuss cutting teachers and/or increasing class sizes.

The BOF distributed and discussed the Town Operating Budget. Virginia Carmany reported that if the BOF expects the school to have a flat budget, the town should do the same. She did not favor cutting the town's budget to allow the school budget to increase.

The BOF discussed the significant increase (4.78%) in the Finance Department's budget request. They will submit their questions/comments to Tom Marsh.

The Town Office Operations indicate an increase of \$7,500 for a new server. Virginia commented that the town did just get a new server. Larry Sypher commented that the IT contractor recently updated the BOS on incidents over the past six months. They recommended an additional server which would back up the present server and support a "virtualization" concept. Larry continued that perhaps the BOS should investigate further.

Virginia Carmany commented on the \$2,000 service contract for the updating the website. The BOF discussed the website and the necessity of additional upgrades to same. The process used to determine the website contractor (Glen Reyer) was discussed. Virginia suggested that the IT Committee be reconvened.

Virginia Carmany reported that the increase proposed by the Town Clerk's Dept. is being offset by Grants. There is \$10,000 in this budget for codification of Town Ordinances. This process would place town ordinances on the town website. A BOF member commented that the more that is placed on the website, the more costs will be incurred to maintain the website.

Virginia Carmany questioned the necessity of the scanner. Larry Sypher responded that this equipment is needed to utilize the laser fiche machine. However, there is scanning equipment in the building that could be utilized through the copiers.

Virginia Carmany reported that the Assessor's budget shows additional data processing for the GIS system. Larry Sypher responded that the maps need continual updating.

Virginia Carmany questioned the increase in the library funding. She questioned the temporary part time and outside clerical lines.

Virginia Carmany had questions regarding the Public Works Dept. outside contractor lines (mowing, tree maintenance, snow plowing). She was interested in the hourly wage of these outside contractors. Joyce Aley commented that our town works department only consists of 3 individuals. It was suggested that perhaps the town should hire an additional individual; which would ultimately reduce the need for outside contractors.

Virginia Carmany commended the Public Safety Dept. for their excellent work. She continued that their request shows a small \$2,000 increase. The stipend received by firefighters was discussed briefly.

The salary of the state trooper and constables was discussed.

It was reported that the majority of the revaluation issues were resolved through the Board of Assessment Appeals.

Employee Benefits – The BOF discussed employee benefits options.

A BOF member suggested negotiating for better rates with the town engineers (Jacobson) and the Town Attorney. Virginia Carmany responded that these contracts go out to bid.

The BOF briefly discussed the fees associated with sewer usage. Virginia Carmany noted that the WPCA's budget is separate from the town budget.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

None.

#### AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

None.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2010, 7:00 p.m.

Larry Sypher made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rick Morrow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski